A
LETTER
TO
EDITOR
OF
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TON'S
MISCEL
LANIES

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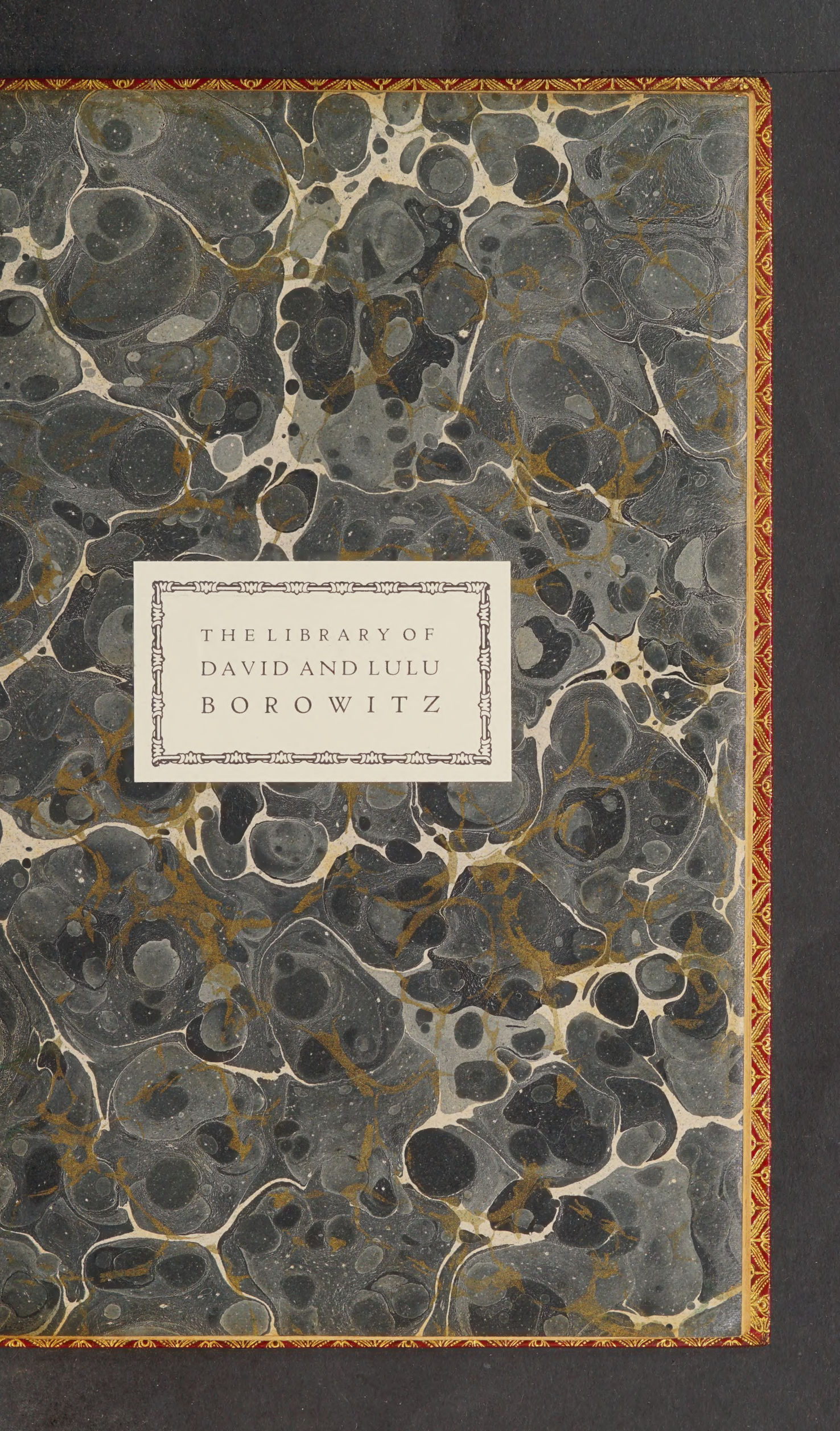
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LETTER

TO THE

EDITOR

OF THE

MISCELLANIES, &c.

A

LETTER

TO THE

Editor of the Miſcellanies

OF

THOMAS CHATTERTON.

STRAWBERRY-HILL:
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A

LETTER

TO THE

Editor of the Miſcellanies, &c.

SIR,

YOU have ſo clearly marked me out as the perſon whom T. Chatterton firſt addreſſed, in order to extricate himſelf from his irkſome ſituation; and you have accompanied that deſcription with ſo injurious a picture of my behaviour, that my appearing to the citation will certainly not ſubject me to the ſuſpicion of vanity. Perhaps I do not think that an anonymous editor, who, to ſatisfy an idle curioſity, calls on a private man for an account of a private tranſaction, is much intitled to an anſwer; ſtill leſs to a public anſwer: becauſe, were ſuch ſummons to be obeyed, the public would be troubled with ten thouſand impertinent diſcuſſions. But as you have gone much far-

ther, and founding yourſelf on a very unjuſt aſſertion, (I hope on miſinformation) have called for the indignation of the public againſt me, it becomes neceſſary to my own character to clear it in as public a manner.

And though, ſir, you are the perſon to whom I ſhall addreſs my vindication, you will allow me to forget you for a moment, while I make an apology to your ſuperior and mine, that Public you appeal to, for the liberty I take in troubling them with the cauſe of ſo inſignificant a perſon as I am. Your mention of me as the firſt to whom Chatterton applied, is not the firſt notice laid before the public of my having been involuntarily involved in his ſtory. Rumours, grafted on circumſtances not fathomed, have even repreſented me as the primary cauſe of his diſmal cataſtrophe; in ſome publications the expreſſions have been ſo little weighed and ſo unguarded, as almoſt to inſinuate this cruel and moſt unjuſt aſperſion. Some of my friends have been ſo kindly hurt at the miſrepreſentation, as to adviſe me to give an open account of my conduct towards Chatterton, with which they were acquainted, and which they knew had been irreproachable. Conſcious of my perfect innocence

nocence on that head, I choſe to reſt upon it. My time of life, averſion to controverſy, and above all, conviction that I am not of conſequence enough to intereſt the attention of the public, made me decline the ſollicitation of my friends. You ſay, ſir, that I am well known to the republic of letters: the deſcription, I doubt, is too magnificent. A trifling writer, whoſe celebrity is confined to a very narrow ſphere, ſcarce deſerves that predication. However, my having been an author, was an additional reaſon why I choſe not to be ſo again, eſpecially in my own cauſe. To be an author, indicates reſpect for the public; it implies ambition of meriting their regard. To ceaſe to be an author, if one has not been totally an unſucceſsful one, is a ſtronger mark of reſpect. It implies apprehenſion of forfeiting their approbation, when declining years may have impaired our faculty of pleaſing. But there is a ſpacious difference between attempting to amuſe the public by one's writings, and preſuming to demand attention to one's ſelf. This latter arrogance I dreaded; and it preponderated to make me ſilent. All I yielded to, was, to ſet down a faithful account of my intercourſe with Chatterton, and to communicate it to ſome few perſons. With that narrative I ſhall

now indulge you, ſir, as you expreſs a wiſh to ſee it. If I violate my own law of not intruding the intereſts of a private man on the awful examination of the public, you, not I, ſir, ought to be reſponſible. You, by your own confeſſion, ignorant of the circumſtances of my tranſaction with Chatterton, have not only ſtigmatized it with the charge of having been contemptuous, but have moſt unwarrantably inſinuated that That my behaviour calls for the indignation of the public. I ſhall examine your reaſoning in ſupport of that anathema preſently----but thus dragged out from a tranquil obſcurity in which I had ſought to paſs the remnant of life, thus traduced before the moſt reſpectable of all auditories, the judgment of my countrymen, I muſt ſtand acquitted in the firſt inſtance of not having voluntarily preſented myſelf before their tribunal. It would be wanting reſpect to what I ſhall ever reverence, the good opinion of mankind, if I declined ſubmitting not only my cauſe, but my defence to their judgment. It would be wearing that arrogance to all, which you unjuſtly charge me with towards one, an ingenious young man, but ſtill more intitled to my reſpect, as he was a poor and unhappy young man; though as you will find, ſir, during my acquaintance with him,

he

he appeared to me in none of thoſe lights. You will find too, that though I was far from treating him either with contempt or neglect, he did not ſeem totally unworthy of both, as I could conſider him under no aſpect but that of a youth who endeavoured to impoſe upon me.

Having thus, ſir, with the deference I owe to them, accepted the jury you have choſen for me, not excepting even to you, however prejudiced againſt me, for (as I flatter myſelf you have rather endeavoured to provoke me to gratify your curioſity, than meant me any ill-will, which as you are totally unknown to me I hope I have not deſerved) I truſt I ſhall bring you over to join in my acquittal. I will forbear to conſider that I ſtand before my country, and will argue the caſe with you with the familiarity of equals; yet having the better of you by my being the perſon wronged, it ſhall be with that good humour which is the charity of innocence, and which though prohibited from controverſial, and rarely admitted into litterary, diſputes, is better ſuited to ſo ridiculous a ſubject, as that which gave birth to this correſpondence between you and me: I mean the queſtion of the authenticity or forgery of the poems

called

called Rowley's. Had that controverſy never been agitated, you and I, ſir, had probably remained unknown to each other. You ſeem more intereſted for the honour of Chatterton's abilities, than ſedulous to prove that he and Rowley, if ſuch a poet as the latter ever exiſted, were animated by ſo congenial a ſpirit, that the compoſitions of the one can hardly, very hardly, be diſcriminated from the other. You give us many ſpecimens of proſe and poetry which you maintain were indubitably Chatterton's. If they were, the wit of man can aſſign no reaſon why the reſt aſcribed to Rowley ſhould not have been coined in the ſame mint. The ſame ſoul animates all, and the limbs that would remain to Rowley would indeed be disjecti membra poetae. Rowley would not only have written with a ſpirit by many centuries poſterior to that of his age, but his mantle eſcaping the hands of all his co-temporaries and ſucceſſors, muſt have been preſerved nothing the worſe for time, and reſerved to inveſt Chatterton from head to foot. I, who rather ſmile at the importance beſtowed on this fantaſtic controverſy, aſſure you, that as I was originally an actor in this interlude without my conſent, ſo am I a ſpectator moſt indifferent how it ſhall terminate. It is of no con-

ſequence

ſequence in my eyes, whether Rowley, an unknown monk of the fifteenth century, wrote like poets of a poliſhed age, in the ſame metres and ſame numbers, though then neither uſed nor known, nor for many years afterwards; or whether Chatterton, an attorney's clerk at Briſtol, could in his very youth counterfeit the language of the fifteenth century. That he could is plain, for he did: and it is indubitably eaſier to copy the ſtile of thoſe who have gone before us, than to imitate that of thoſe who will not be born till many ages after we ſhall be dead---but it is not my buſineſs to enter into the general ſpirit of this grave controverſy, but to clear myſelf from having been the innocent cauſe of its remaining ſo embroiled. Still I am ſo much obliged to you for having owned that you know none of the circumſtances of my part in the affair, and there is ſuch honeſt ſimplicity in condemning a man firſt, and then deſiring him to tell you his ſtory, that it would be unpardonable to be angry with, or to deceive you, and I give you my word I will be guilty of neither.

What relates to me is contained in the following paſſages of your preface. "One of his [Chatterton's] firſt efforts to emerge from a ſituation ſo irkſome

irkſome * to him, was an application to a gentleman well known in the republic of letters; which unfortunately for the public and himſelf, met with a very cold reception: and which the diſappointed author always ſpoke of with a high degree of acrimony, whenever it was mentioned to him." pp. xviii. xix.

Again, p. xxi. "Perhaps the reader may feel ſome indignation againſt the perſon to whom his firſt application was made, and by whom he was treated with neglect and contempt. It were to be wiſhed that the public was fully informed of all the circumſtances attending that unhappy application; the event of which deprived the world of works which might have contributed to the honour of the nation, as well as the comfort and happineſs of their unfortunate author."

In

* He was bound apprentice to a lawyer, and "poſſeſſed, ſays the preface, all the vices and irregularities of youth, and his profligacy was at leaſt as conſpicuous as his abilities. Although he was of a profeſſion, which might be ſaid to accelerate his purſuits in antiquities, yet ſo averſe was he to that profeſſion that he could never overcome it." p. xviii.

In theſe paſſages, ſir, there are propoſitions of different kinds, which amounting to a heavy charge on me, you will allow me to analyze. I am firſt taxed with giving a very cold reception to Chatterton's addreſs. Within two pages, that coldneſs is grown to neglect and contempt: and within few words more, my contempt is ſwoln to the heavy accuſation of driving the unhappy youth to deſpair and ſuicide---I ſhudder, ſir, and ſo ought you, not at the conſequence of his diſmal fate, the depriving the world of works that Chatterton might have written, and which you fondly imagine would have contributed to the honour of the nation; but I ſhudder at having that diſmal cataſtrophe imputed to my cruelty and arrogance---nor have you cauſe to exult at lightly calumniating an innocent perſon in ſo black a manner---I have reaſon to ſay you calumniate me lightly, for if you knew the circumſtances, would you be reduced to wiſh that the world were fully informed of them? Would you not lay them before the world? Or is it from tenderneſs to me that you ſuppreſs them? I intreat you to tell all you know---conceal nothing. I am going to give my narrative. Canvaſs it as rigorouſly as you have accuſed me. Detect the moſt minute grain of falſhood---ſurely you had better

grounds than the partial relation of a disappointed author, who you say never mentioned me without a high degree of acrimony!

To so serious an apostrophe as this I am almost ashamed to join remarks on the ludicrous conclusion of your peroratio: but can I help smiling at your lamentation over imaginary abortions which my freezing breath nipped in their præ-existent state? Let me administer other comfort to you than you have bestowed on me. Recollect, sir, that premature genius is seldom equally great in its meridian. Psalmanaazar, the prototype of Chatterton, as you and I coincided in thinking, though he reformed his morals and died a virtuous man, which we cannot be sure would have been Chatterton's case, seemed, though always a very sensible man, to have exhausted his inventive faculties in his creation of Formosa. The thread of my argument will suggest other consolations to you; but the pain you have given to my sensibility will not allow me to indulge longer mirth. It is very seriously that I must ask you, whether it was the part of a wise man to credit the tales of an acrimonious and disappointed youth, and whose profligacy you say was so conspicuous? Was it the part of a just

man

man [for that part you could not receive from Chatterton] to couple his firſt unſucceſsful application with his fatal exit, and load me with both? Does your enthuſiaſtic admiration of his abilities, or your regrets for the honour of England's poetry, warrant ſuch a concatenation of ideas? Was poor Chatterton ſo modeſt or ſo deſponding as to abandon his enterpriſes on their being damped by me? Did he not continue, purſue them? Is this country ſo deſtitute of patrons of genius, or do I move in ſo eminent and diſtinguiſhed a ſphere, that a repulſe from me is a dagger to talents? Did not Chatterton come to London after that miſcarriage? Did he relinquiſh his counterfeiting propenſity on its being loſt on me? Was he an inoffenſive ingenuous youth, ſmit with the love of the muſes, and ſoaring above a ſordid and ſervile profeſſion, whoſe early bloſſoms being blighted by my inſolence, withered in mortified obſcurity, and on ſeeing his hopes of fame blaſted, ſunk beneath the frowns of ignorant and inſolent wealth? Or did he after launching into all the exceſſes you deſcribe, and vainly hoping to gratify his ambition by adulation to or ſatires on all ranks and parties of men, fall a victim to his own ungovernable ſpirit, and to the deplorable ſtraits to which he had reduced himſelf?

ſelf? The interval was ſhort, I own; but as every moment of ſo extraordinary a life was crouded with efforts of his enterpriſing genius, allow me to ſay with truth, that there was a large chaſm between his application to me, and his miſerable concluſion. You know there was; and though my falling into his ſnare might have varied the area of his exploits, it is more likely that that ſucceſs would rather have encouraged than checked his enterpriſes. When he purſued his turn for fabricating ancient writings, in ſpite of the mortification he received from me, it is not probable that he would have been corrected by ſucceſs. Such is not the nature of ſucceſs, when it is the reward of artifice. I ſhould be more juſtly reproachable for having contributed to *cheriſh* an impoſtor, than I am for having accelerated his fate. I cannot repeat the words without emotions of indignation on my own account, and of compaſſion on his---but I have promiſed to argue calmly, and I will.

How will you be ſurpriſed, and, for your ſake I hope concerned, [or you muſt be as unfeeling as you repreſent me] when you find that my ſhare in Chatterton's fate is reduced ſimply to this? A lad at Briſtol, whom I never ſaw then, before, or ſince, ſends

ſends me two or three copies of verſes in old Engliſh, which he tells me had been found there and were lent to him by another perſon; acquaints me that he is clerk to an attorney, but having more inclination to poetry, wiſhes that I would procure him a place that would enable him to follow his propenſity: I ſuſpect the poetry to be modern; he is angry, redemands it; I return it----and two years after, the youth is found dead----and by the ſtrength of a warm imagination, I am accuſed of blaſting this promiſing genius, and of depriving the world of the lord knows what Iliads and Loſt Paradiſes, which this youth might have procreated in his own or any other name----for in truth he was fonder of inventing great bards, than of being one.

Thus, ſir, am I become perhaps the firſt inſtance of a perſon conſigned to judgment for not having been made a fool of! But is it not hard that a man on whom a forgery has been tried unſucceſsfully, ſhould for that ſingle reaſon be held out to the world as the aſſaſſin of genius? If a banker to whom a forged note ſhould be preſented, ſhould refuſe to accept it, and the ingenious fabricator ſhould afterwards fall a victim to his own

ſlight

ſlight of hand, would you accuſe the poor banker to the public, and urge that his caution had deprived the world of ſome ſuppoſititious deed of ſettlement, that would have deceived the whole court of chancery, and deprived ſome great family of its eſtate?

With me why are you offended? You ſeem yourſelf to queſtion the authenticity of the poems attributed to Rowley. Are you angry that I was not more a dupe than you? If I ſuſpected his forgeries, how did they intitle him to my aſſiſtance? Are you ſure that I was acquainted with Chatterton's genius or diſtreſſes? Do you know certainly which of his productions were communicated to me? Is it candid to accuſe me of rejecting forgeries, when you give proofs of his having forged---I do not mean to uſe the term *forged* in a harſh ſenſe: I ſpeak of Chatterton's mintage, as forgeries of poems in ancient language; and I am perſuaded that when you condemn me for not having encouraged the coiner, you only mean to inſinuate, that if I had aſſiſted him, I might have ſaved him from the diſmal abyſs into which he plunged. It is fair to interpret your words in this candid ſenſe. What I complain of is, that you

convert

convert that poſſibility into poſitive deſpair in Chatterton, that you couple my rejection with his ſuicide, and by your inuendoes inſinuate that there was ſomething more in my repulſe than the world is appriſed of; and leſt it ſhould want a name, you have baptized it neglect and contempt.

I lament, ſir, as much as you, that I was not deceived, if my being a dupe would have converted him into an honeſt man. I lament that his own impetuous temper and indiſcretion prevented my ever ſeeing him; but when you have peruſed my narrative, I think you will no longer be of opinion that I was in the wrong to decline all correſpondence with him. He could appear to me in no light, but in that of a bold young man, who for his intereſt wanted to impoſe upon me, and who did not commence his intercourſe with me in a manner to dazzle my judgment, or give me a high opinion of his own----I allude to the article of his liſt of great painters at Briſtol. I ſaw he was, as he told me himſelf, a youth tied to a profeſſion he did not like, and born with a taſte for more ingenuous ſtudies.----Conſider, ſir, what would be the condition of the world, what the ſatisfaction of parents, and what Peruvian mines muſt be poſſeſ-

ſed

ſed by the Mæcenas's of the times, if every muſe-ſtruck-lad who is bound to an attorney, every clerk

------born his father's ſoul to croſs,
And pen a ſtanza when he ſhould engroſs,

ſhould have nothing to do but to draw a bill or a couplet on the patron of learning in vogue, and have his fetters ſtruck off, and a poſt aſſigned to him under the government. The duties of office perhaps would not be too well executed by theſe ſecretaries of the muſes; and though Apollo's kingdom would certainly come, king George's would not be too well ſerved. Mr. Pope, I know, laments the miſapplication of talents, enumerates the deſerters from Helicon, and tells us

How many Martials were in Pultney loſt;

but this was irony and compliment, and Pope himſelf would have been ſorry that his friend our great chief juſtice,

He with a thouſand arts refin'd, *

ſhould have quitted the bar, and been nothing but poet laureate.

There

* V. Pope's tranſlation of Intermiſſa Venus diu.

There is another point, ſir, which you forget to meaſure, my abilities in the character of a Mæcenas. My fortune is private and moderate; my ſituation, more private; my intereſt, none. I was neither born to wealth, nor to accumulate it: I have indulged a taſte for expenſive baubles, with little attention to œconomy; it did not become me to give myſelf airs of protection; and though it might not be generous, I have been leſs fond of the company of authors, than of their works. I have not the vanity to boaſt of virtues, but it is ſurely allowable to clear myſelf from ſuch odious qualities, as inſolence and cruelty, if I do not deſerve the imputation. It is ingenuous, it is becoming, to confeſs our defects; arrogant, preſumptuous, to vaunt our merits; for how can men conſcious, as moſt men are, of a larger proportion of the former than of the latter, hope that a few meritorious actions will leaven or obliterate the maſs of their faults? Indeed, what have we but our faults that we can call our own? Our talents are given to us by the Giver of all good---what virtues we have are the production of fear, prudence, experience, hypocriſy * and age. Some god-like

 natures

* It may ſound like a paradox or a contradiction to aſſign hyprocriſy, the counterfeit of virtue, as one of its ſources; but

natures there are, who love virtue for herſelf, and whom opulence and honours cannot corrupt; ſome whom trials and temptations exalt; and more, who in lowly ſpheres never deviate from the ſimplicity of truth and reaſon; but all theſe are preciſely ſuch as would not quarrel with my definition above, and are too modeſt not to be humble on their own conqueſt over themſelves. In ſhort, our frailties and weakneſſes are ſo numerous, at leaſt I am ſure mine

but nothing more is meant than this; that it produces the effects of virtue, and ſometimes produces virtue itſelf. If falſe devotion affects charity, the poor are as much benefitted as if the intention were ſincere. Hypocriſy ſometimes mellows to enthuſiaſm; as has been thought to have been the caſe of Cromwell, and more probably was ſo of Madame de Maintenon. Mad. de la Valiere was in love with the perſon of Louis, then young and handſome; but as he was on the verge of fifty when Mad. de Maintenon engaged him to marry her, ambition could be her only motive: and as ſhe could only effectuate her plan by inſpiring him with piety, her own muſt have been very problematic. Yet it became ſo habitual, that at laſt there can be little doubt of her ſincerity. Hypocriſy made her a King's wife; but as ſhe found ennui, not pleaſure on a throne, nothing higher was left but heaven; and having found that all was vanity, what had been cant, became reflection; and thus hypocriſy in her was the parent of virtue.

mine have been ſo, that benevolence ought to forbid exaggeration of the account.

You may lament, ſir, as I do, that I was not better acquainted with the genius of Chatterton, but you will convince nobody that I deſerve the indignation of the public for that ignorance. Had I known him thoroughly, I do not believe that my admiration of his talents would have abſorbed all diſtruſt of his character. The public is too equitable to condemn any man for not countenancing a ſuſpicious ſubject, however ſhining his abilities. Omit the term *contempt*, which you have groundleſsly aſcribed to me, and tell me in what reſpect my behaviour to Chatterton deſerves reproach. Was it culpable in me to doubt at firſt what ſo many have ſince doubted? And doubting, did not common prudence require that I ſhould aſk for farther ſatisfaction? Are unknown poets of ſo high an order, have they ſuch chartered immunities, as to be diſpenſed from bringing a character from their laſt place? Was my aſking for that ſatisfaction, contemptuous? Was my giving him advice, neglect? Was my returning his papers without a word of reproach on his arrogance, arrogant? You will not affirm it. Still leſs, ſir,

was I gifted with penetration enough, with ſuch intuition into the powers of one I never ſaw, as from two or three brief letters and two or three equivocal copies of verſes, to conceive, to prophecy, that the writer would, if properly cheriſhed, *prove the firſt of Engliſh poets.* p. xx.---but when I am tried by hyperbole, I cannot wonder the ſentence ſhould be bombaſt.

Might I be allowed to plead my own diſcretion againſt Chatterton's inſpiration, which by the way he concealed from me, ſhrouding himſelf like a Pagan divinity under the mortal garb of an attorney's clerk, who had only borrowed ſome divine poems, I might urge in excuſe for my caution, that this was the ſecond time that I had been ſelected, I know not why, for communicating revelations of the muſes to mankind; and not having my miſſion acknowledged in the firſt inſtance, I was *reſtive*, as even prophets have been, in accepting the commiſſion; eſpecially as I ſuſpected that the ſecond diſpenſation was but a copy of the firſt. In ſhort, ſir, I was one of the firſt intruſted with ſpecimens of Oſſian's fragments, which though I implicitly credited, I had not found univerſally received. I had not zeal enough to embark a ſecond

time

time in a ſimilar cruſado. I have told you how indifferent I am to the controverſy about Rowley's poems. I confeſs as fairly that I ſee no reaſon for thinking they were not all Chatterton's. The only argument of any weight on the other ſide, is the greatneſs of the phænomenon. Men can ſcarce conceive how at his age and under his diſadvantages he could collect ſuch foundation for his forgeries; for there lies the ſtreſs of the argument, not in his genius. You, ſir, have proved that he had amaſſed ſuch materials, and had ſufficient genius to put them into ſhape. That ſome pieces produced by him as ancient or tranſlations from old writers, were of his own invention, you affirm; yet he gave them at firſt as tranſcripts of old originals, and under other names. Are the poems aſcribed to Rowley ſuperior in merit to the compoſitions now allowed to be Chatterton's own? Have they more of the ſpirit of the antique? Have they any thing antique in them but ſingle words? Is the phraſeology, or turn of thinking, that of the fifteenth century? Did his producing ſome as Rowley's, without ever acknowledging the fraud, deſerve any credit? Does an authority ſo proſtituted deſerve faith? Is there any other evidence, antient or modern? Yes, it will be ſaid, the antient parchments. But is there

not

not reaſon to believe that he did, what was much eaſier to perform, copy ancient hands as well as ancient language---ancient ſtyle I deny that he ever imitated happily.

Upon the whole, ſir, I cannot agree with you, that Chatterton's premature fate has defrauded the world of any thing half ſo extraordinary as the miracles he wrought in almoſt his childhood. Had he lived longer, ample proofs of his forgeries, which proofs he deſtroyed in his rage, might have been preſerved; and inſtead of the poſthumous glory of puzzling the learned world, his name might now be only recorded as that of an arch-impoſtor. The learned perſons, who ſtill believe in Rowley, might be robbed of ſo great an ornament to a dark and monkiſh age. True antiquaries would not taſte a genius, if they thought it a co-temporary. The elegance of Waller, the fire of Dryden, want in ſome eyes the unintelligible jargon of a barbarous century to make them captivate. Exanceaſtre,* Godred Crovan, Ceolwolf and Tatwallin,

* Exanceaſtre, Exeter. Godred Crovan is the title of one of Chatterton's fictitious tranſlations; Ceolwolf is one of his heroes, and Tatwallin, one of his bards. See his Miſcellanies.

wallin, are dearer to moderno-Saxon eyes, than all the harmonious images in Ælla. They cannot bear to diveſt their Gothic repoſitories of ſuch precious gems. Controverſy too has its charms, and delights the learned world more than indiſputable diſcoveries----but, truſt me, ſir, your friends and mine, the bookſellers, have no cauſe to regret my not having been the dupe of Chatterton. He has made ten dupes for one, that he would have gained by impoſing upon me. Yet the cauſe of Rowley's poems would not laſt an hour in a court of law. If Chatterton had pretended to find a hoard of crown-pieces, but ſtamped with the face and titles of Edward IV. and if it were proved that he had coined half of them, would a jury doubt a moment but that he had coined the other half? The metres aſcribed to Rowley no more exiſted in the reign of Edward IV. than crown-pieces did.

There remains a charge inſinuated at leaſt, which I am ſtill more deſirous to repell, that of inſenſibility to Chatterton's diſtreſſes, and which will fall to the ground with the reſt, on attending to dates. Chatterton was neither indigent nor diſtreſſed at the time of his correſpondence with me. He was maintained by his mother, and lived with a lawyer.

His

His only pleas to my assistance were, disgust to his profession, inclination to poetry, and communication of some suspicious MSS. His distress was the consequence of quitting his master, and of coming to London, and of his other extravagancies. He had depended on the impulse of the talents he felt for making impression and lifting him to wealth, honours, and fame. I have already said, that I should have been blameable to his mother, and society, if I had seduced an apprentice from his master to marry him to the nine muses: and I should have encouraged a propensity to forgery, which is not the talent most wanting culture in the present age. All of the house of forgery are relations; and though it is just to Chatterton's memory to say, that his poverty never made him claim kindred with the richest, or most enriching branches, yet his ingenuity in counterfeiting styles, and I believe, hands, might easily have led him to those more facile imitations of prose, promissory notes. Yet it does not appear to my knowledge that his honesty in that respect was ever perverted. He made no scruple of extending the circulation of litterary credit, and of bamboozling the misers of Saxon riches; but he never attempted to defraud, cheat, rob, unpoetically. He preserved dignity in

despair;

deſpair; and indignant alone at the deluſions of his own genius, he tore to ſcraps the unſucceſsful monuments of his parts, and poiſoned himſelf on being refuſed a loaf of bread.

It is that fierce and untameable ſpirit, that conſciouſneſs of ſuperior abilities, that inattention to worldly diſcretion and its paths, that ſcorn of owing ſubſiſtance or reputation to any thing but the ebullitions of genius, that I regret not having known; that I lament not having contributed to reſcue from itſelf. Some faint efforts of advice you will find in my narrative I did attempt: nor were they delivered with contempt, arrogance, or cruelty. I ſhould be aſhamed with reaſon if I could charge myſelf with behaviour ſo unbecoming my own private ſituation, ſo unworthy of a man. But this part of my defence muſt be weak, as it muſt reſt on my own aſſeveration, having kept no copies of my letters. Perhaps it may find collateral ſupport from the ſilence of my accuſers. Will any man charge me with poſitive inſolence towards Chatterton? Did he accuſe me of it in his moſt acrimonious moments? Did he impute to me any thing but diſtruſt of his MSS.? To myſelf, he did impute arrogance---but on what grounds---on

my not having returned his papers on his firſt ſummons. The world muſt decide on the weight of that crime. I confeſs the charge: I tell it myſelf. To judge me fairly, every man muſt place himſelf in my ſituation. If I have related the exact truth, in what light was my behaviour ſupercilious or intemperate? Let all Chatterton's relations and friends tell all they know. Reſting on my own innocence, I never ſaw, I never applied to one of them to ſuppreſs a tittle of my conduct. They are open to inquiries; let them be canvaſſed. No man living has had cauſe to reſent my treatment of that unfortunate youth---except---thoſe, who enamoured with the reſurrection of the imaginary Rowley, were by my accidental and inadvertent doubts not left in the undiſturbed poſſeſſion of a world of novel antiquities, nor ſuffered quietly to become the dupes of an impoſtor of eighteen.

You, ſir, indeed, have hypothetically condemned my ſerving as a beacon [for I proteſt I have taken no pains to deſtroy the viſionary fabric invented by Chatterton, but by telling my own ſtory, which from the firſt moment I have related occaſionally and conſiſtently as I tell it now] to warn the learned world againſt ſuppoſititious ancients and frabricated

fabricated antiquities. You caution all the litterati not to make uſe of their ſenſes, leſt promiſing impoſtors ſhould be nipped in the bud, and mankind ſhould be deprived of new Rowleys, who, as Richardſon ſaid a little boldly of Milton, would litterally be *ancients born ſome centuries after their time.*

I will detain you no longer from the peruſal of my narrative, but to ſatisfy you on its authenticity. It was ſent in May laſt to a gentleman who will atteſt the receipt of it. The relation at Bath to whom I applied for information about Chatterton, is a noble lady of virtue and character, who well remembers the circumſtances of my application to her. Several perſons of honour and veracity were preſent at the royal academy when I firſt heard of Chatterton's death, and will atteſt my ſurpriſe and concern, and bear witneſs to my having related the ſtory of my correſpondence with him exactly as in the ſubjoined narrative. Mr. Maſon was privy to the whole: others will confirm my having always given the ſame account, both before and after Chatterton's death.

Corroborated by theſe authorities, do I flatter myſelf too much, ſir, if I hope that you will not only retract your accuſation, but reſtore me to that ſhare of your good opinion which I loſt by your having received ſo unjuſt a ſtate of my behaviour to the poor youth in queſtion? The unprejudiced public, I truſt, will not think I merit their indignation. I ſincerely aſk their pardon for treſpaſſing ſo long on their patience----but the length of my addreſs is proof of my anxiety for being miſrepreſented to them: and they will be ſo gracious as to remember, that this memorial has been extorted from me, and not till I found that my innocence was not ſufficient protection. If my countrymen acquit me, I ſhall be happy. If you, ſir, join your voice to theirs, I ſhall not think I have miſpent the time I have employed to undeceive you. Perhaps I never drew the attention of the public towards myſelf to ſo good purpoſe; for to have one's name known, is of little uſe; to wipe off the aſperſion of arrogance, is important; of inhumanity, very important indeed.

Here follows the promiſed Narrative.

EXTRACT

EXTRACT OF A LETTER

FROM

Mr. H. W. to Mr. W. B.

I Am far from determined to publiſh any thing about Chatterton. It would almoſt look like making myſelf a party. I do not love controverſy. If I print, my chief reaſon would be, that both in the account of the poems, and in Mr. Warton's laſt volume, my name has been brought in with ſo little circumſpection and accuracy, that it looks as if *my* rejection of Chatterton hâd driven him to deſpair; whereas I was the firſt perſon on whom he eſſayed his art and ambition, inſtead of being the laſt. I never ſaw him; there was an interval of near two years between his application to me, and his diſmal end; nor had he quitted his maſter, nor was neceſſitous, nor otherwiſe poor than attornies clerks are, nor had he come to London, nor launched into diſſipation, when his correſpondence with me ſtopped.

As faithfully as I can recollect the circumſtances, without dates, and without ſearching for what few memo-

memorandums I preſerved relative to him, I will recapitulate his hiſtory with me.

Bathoe, my bookſeller, brought me a pacquet left with him. It contained an ode, or little poem of two or three ſtanzas *in alternate rhyme*, on the death of Richard the Iſt. and I was told in very few lines that it had been found at Briſtol with many other old poems; and that the poſſeſſor could furniſh me with accounts of a ſeries of great painters that had flouriſhed at Briſtol.

Here I muſt pauſe, to mention my own reflections. At firſt I concluded that ſomebody having met with my Anecdotes of Painting, had a mind to laugh at me, I thought not very ingeniouſly, as I was not likely to ſwallow a ſucceſſion of great painters at Briſtol. The ode, or ſonnet, as I think it was called, was too pretty to be part of the plan; and, as is eaſy with all the other ſuppoſed poems of Rowley, it was not difficult to make it very modern by changing the old words for new; though yet more difficult than with moſt of them ---you ſee, I tell you fairly the caſe. I then imagined, and do ſtill, that the ſucceſs of Oſſian's poems had ſuggeſted the idea. Whether the tranſmitter

mitter hinted, or I ſuppoſed from the ſubject, that the diſcovered treaſure was of the age of Richard the Iſt. I cannot take upon me to aſſert---yet that impreſſion was ſo ſtrong on my mind, that two years after, when Dr. Goldſmith told me they were then allotted to the age of Henry IV. or V. I ſaid with ſurpriſe, "they have ſhifted the date extremely." This is no evidence---but there is one line in the printed poems of Rowley that makes me more firmly believe that the age of Richard the Iſt. was the aera* fixed upon by Chatterton for his forgeries;

* It is very remarkable that William of Wyrceſtre, an edition of whoſe work was printed laſt winter, and who was a native of Briſtol and often mentions Canninge, takes not the ſmalleſt notice of Rowley, though ſo bright an ornament of his native city, were the poems aſcribed to him genuine. Gower and Lidgate flouriſhed at the ſame time, and were well known—yet how barbarous, how inferior are their compoſitions, how diſſimilar their language, to the works aſcribed to Rowley! Is it credible that he ſhould not have been heard of, when very indifferent poets were famous? The indefatigable Bale, who lived two hundred years nearer to the age of Rowley, than we do, and who dug a thouſand bad authors out of obſcurity, never lighted upon ſo much as his name. The manner of the

forgeries; for *that* line ſays,

Now is Cœur de Lion gone----

or ſome ſuch words, for I quote by memory, not having the book at hand. It is very improbable that Rowley, writing in the reign of Henry VI. or Edward IV. as is now pretended, or in that of Henry IV. as was aſſigned by the credulous, before they had digeſted their ſyſtem, ſhould incidentally in a poem on another ſubject, ſay, *now* is Richard dead. I am perſuaded that Chatterton himſelf, before he had dived into Canning's hiſtory,

the revival of Rowley was as ſuſpicious as poſſible; and not only reſts upon the faith of a youth convicted of many ſimilar forgeries, but was rendered more incredible by the dark conduct of the diſcoverer. Had a youth, enamoured of poetry, found a large quantity of old poems, what would he have done? Produced them cautiouſly and one by one, ſtudied them and copied their ſtyle, and exhibited ſometimes a genuine and ſometimes a fictitious piece? or blazed the diſcovery abroad, and called in every lover of poetry and antiquity to participation of the treaſure? The characters of impoſture are on every part of the ſtory; and were it true, it would ſtill remain one of thoſe improbable wonders, which we have no reaſon for believing.

tory, had fixed on a much earlier period for the age of his forgeries---now I return to my narrative.

I wrote, according to the incloſed direction, for farther particulars. Chatterton, in anſwer, informed me that he was the ſon of a poor widow, who ſupported him with great difficulty; that he was clerk or apprentice to an attorney, but had a taſte and turn for more elegant ſtudies; and hinted a wiſh that I would aſſiſt him with my intereſt in emerging out of ſo dull a profeſſion, by procuring him ſome place, in which he could purſue his natural bent. He affirmed that great treaſures of antient poetry had been diſcovered in his native city, and were in the hands of a perſon, who had lent him thoſe he had tranſmitted to me; for he now ſent me others, amongſt which was an abſolute modern paſtoral in dialogue, thinly ſprinkled with old words. Pray obſerve, ſir, that he affirmed having received the poems from another perſon; whereas it is aſcertained that the gentleman at Briſtol who poſſeſſes the fund of Rowley's poems, received them from Chatterton.

I wrote to a relation of mine at Bath to enquire into the ſituation and character of Chatterton ac-

cording to his own account of himſelf; nothing was returned about his character, but his own ſtory was verified.

In the mean time I communicated the poems to Mr. Gray and Mr. Maſon, who at once pronounced them forgeries, and declared there was no ſymptom in them of their being the productions of near ſo diſtant an age; the language and metres being totally unlike any thing ancient; for though I no doubt, to them, aſcribed them to the time of Richard Iſt. Mr. Gray nor Mr. Maſon ſaw any thing in the poems that was not more recent than even the reign of Henry VIII.---and here let me remark how incredible it is that Rowley, a monk of a mere commercial town, which was all Briſtol * then was, ſhould have purified the language and introduced a diverſified metre more claſſic than was known to that poliſhed courtly poet, lord Surry; and this in the barbarous turbulent times of Henry VI. and that the whole nation ſhould have relapſed into the ſame barbariſm of ſtyle and verſification, till lord Surry, I might almoſt ſay, till Waller,

* Rowley is made to call it a city, which it was not till afterwards.

Waller, aroſe. I leave to better ſcholars and better antiquaries to ſettle how Rowley became ſo well verſed in the Greek tragedians. He was as well acquainted with Butler, or Butler with him, for a chaplain of the late Biſhop of Exeter has found in Rowley a line of Hudibras.

Well, ſir, being ſatisfied with my intelligence about Chatterton, I wrote him a letter with as much kindneſs and tenderneſs, as if I had been his guardian; for though I had no doubt of his impoſitions, ſuch a ſpirit of poetry breathed in his coinage, as intereſted me for him: nor was it a grave crime in a young bard to have forged falſe notes of hand that were to paſs current only in the pariſh of Parnaſſus. I undeceived him about my being a perſon of any intereſt, and urged to him that in duty and gratitude to his mother, who had ſtraitened herſelf to breed him up to a profeſſion, he ought to labour in it, that in her old age he might abſolve his filial debt; and I told him, that when he ſhould have made a fortune, he might unbend himſelf with the ſtudies conſonant to his inclinations. I told him alſo, that I had communicated his tranſcripts to much better judges, and that they were by no means ſatisfied with the au-

thenticity of his ſuppoſed MSS. I mentioned their reaſons, particularly that there were no ſuch metres known in the age of Richard Iſt.---and that might be a reaſon with Chatterton himſelf to ſhift the aera of his productions.

He wrote me rather a peeviſh anſwer, ſaid he could not conteſt with a perſon of my learning, (a compliment by no means due to me, and which I certainly had not aſſumed, having mentioned my having conſulted abler judges) maintained the genuineneſs of the poems, and demanded to have them returned, as they were the property of another gentleman. Remember this.

When I received this letter, I was going to Paris in a day or two, and either forgot his requeſt of the poems, or perhaps not having time to have them copied, deferred complying till my return, which was to be in ſix weeks. I proteſt I do not remember which was the caſe; and yet, though in a cauſe of ſo little importance, I will not utter a ſyllable of which I am not poſitively certain; nor will charge my memory with a tittle beyond what it retains.

Soon

Soon after my return from France, I received another letter from Chatterton, the ſtyle of which was ſingularly impertinent. He demanded his poems roughly; and added, that I ſhould not have *dared* to uſe him ſo ill, if he had not acquainted me with the narrowneſs of his circumſtances.

My heart did not accuſe me of inſolence to him. I wrote an anſwer expoſtulating with him on his injuſtice, and renewing good advice----but upon ſecond thoughts, reflecting that ſo wrong-headed a young man, of whom I knew nothing, and whom I had never ſeen, might be abſurd enough to print my letter, I flung it into the fire; and wrapping up both his poems and letters, without taking a copy of either, for which I am now ſorry, I returned all to him, and thought no more of him or them, till about a year and half after, when

Dining at the royal academy, Dr. Goldſmith drew the attention of the company with an account of a marvellous treaſure of ancient poems lately diſcovered at Briſtol, and expreſſed enthuſiaſtic belief in them, for which he was laughed at by Dr. Johnſon, who was preſent. I ſoon found this was the trouvaille of my friend Chatterton; and I told

told Dr. Goldſmith that this novelty was none to me, who might, if I had pleaſed, have had the honour of uſhering the great diſcovery to the learned world. You may imagine, ſir, we did not at all agree in the meaſure of our faith; but though his credulity diverted me, my mirth was ſoon daſhed, for on aſking about Chatterton, he told me he had been in London, and had deſtroyed himſelf. I heartily wiſhed then that I had been the dupe of all the poor young man had written to me, for who would not have his underſtanding impoſed on to ſave a fellow Being from the utmoſt wretchedneſs, deſpair and ſuicide!----and a poor young man not eighteen----and of ſuch miraculous talents---- for, dear ſir, if I wanted credulity on one hand, it is ample on the other. Yet heap all the improbabilities you pleaſe on the head of Chatterton, the impoſſibility on Rowley's ſide will remain. An amazing genius for poetry, which one of them poſſeſſed, might flaſh out in the darkeſt age----but could Rowley anticipate the phraſeology of the eighteenth century? His poetic fire might burſt through the obſtacles of the times; like Homer or other original bards, he might have formed a poetical ſtyle---but would it have been preciſely that of an age ſubſequent to him by ſome hundred years?

Nobody

Nobody can admire the poetry of the poems in queſtion more than I do---but except being better than moſt modern verſes, in what do they differ in the conſtruction? The words are old, the conſtruction evidently of yeſterday; and by ſubſtituting modern words, aye, ſingle words, to the old, or to thoſe invented by Chatterton, in what do they differ? Try that method with any compoſition, even in proſe, of the reign of Henry VI.---and ſee if the conſequence will be the ſame---but I am getting into the controverſy, inſtead of concluding my narrative, which indeed is ended.

You ſeem to think Chatterton might have aſſiſtance---I don't know but he might; but one of the wonderful parts of his prodigious ſtory, is, that he had formed diſciples---yes, at eighteen. Some of his youthful companions have continued to walk in his paths, and have produced Saxon and other poems of antique caſt; but not with the poetic ſpirit of their maſter: nor can it be diſcovered that Chatterton received inſtruction or aid from any man of learning or abilities. Dr. P. and Mr. L. have collected every thing relating to him that can be traced, and all tends to concenter the forgery of Rowley's poems in his ſingle perſon.

They

They have numerous pieces of Chatterton's writing in various ways---nay, ſo verſatile, ſo extenſive, ſo commanding was his genius, that he forged architecture and heraldry; that is, could invent both in art and in folly---In ſhort, I do not believe that there ever exiſted ſo maſter a genius, except that of Pſalmanaazar, who before twenty-two could create a language, that all the learned of Europe, though they ſuſpected, could not detect.

Thus, ſir, with the moſt ſcrupulous veracity, I have told you my ſhare in that unhappy young man's ſtory. With more pains I could add a few dates, but the ſubſtance would be identically the ſame. Rowley would be a prophet, a foreſeer, if the poems were his; yet in any other light he would not be ſo extraordinary a phænomenon as Chatterton----whom, though he was a bad man, as is ſaid, I lament not having ſeen. He might at that time have been leſs corrupted, and my poor patronage might have ſaved him from the abyſs into which he plunged----but, alas! how could I ſurmiſe that the well-being and exiſtence of a human creature depended on my ſwallowing a legend; and from an unknown perſon? Thank God! ſo far from having any thing to charge myſelf

ſelf with on Chatterton's account, it is very hypothetical to ſuppoſe that I could have ſtood between him and ruin. It is one of thoſe poſſible events, which we ſhould be miſerable indeed if imputable to a conſcience that had not the ſmalleſt light to direct it! If I went to Bengal, I might perhaps interpoſe and ſave the life of ſome poor Indian devoted by the fury of a Britiſh nabob; but amiable as ſuch Quixotiſm would be, we are not to ſacrifice every duty to the poſſibility of realizing one conſcientious viſion. I believe I have tired you; I am ſure I have wearied my own hand, which has written theſe ſeven pages without pauſing; but when any thing takes poſſeſſion of my mind, I forget my gouty fingers and my age----or perhaps betray the latter by my garrulity----however, it will ſave me more trouble----I ſhall certainly never write a word more about Chatterton. You are my confeſſor; I have unburthened my ſoul to you, and I truſt you will not enjoin me a public penance.

Yours moſt ſincerely,

Strawberry-hill,
May 23, 1778.

HOR. WALPOLE.

POSTSCRIPT.

I recollect another paſſage that I muſt add. A gentleman of rank, being ſtruck with the beauty of the poems, and believing their antique originality, purchaſed a copy of them, and ſhewed it to me. I expreſſed my doubts----now, then, ſaid the perſon, I will convince you: here is a painter's bill that you cannot queſtion. What think you, now? This, I replied, I do believe genuine; and I will tell you why----and taking down the firſt volume of my Anecdotes of Painting, I ſhewed him the identic bill printed ſome years before. This, ſaid I, I know is ancient: Vertue tranſcribed it twenty years ago from ſome old *parchments

* That amongſt thoſe old parchments there might be ſome old poetry, is very poſſible. All I contend for is, that moſt of what Chatterton produced for Rowley's, was fictitious; eſpecially *all* the pieces in modern metres, *all* that have nothing of antiquity but the ſimple words, as Ælla, The Battle of Haſtings, The Death of Sir Charles Baldwin, &c. Chatterton was too great a poet for the age he copied; his ſoaring genius beſtowed more elegance and harmony on Rowley than comported with the 15th. century.

ments in the church of St. Mary, Ratcliffe, at Briſtol.----*That* was the origine of Chatterton's liſt of great painters----and probably of his other inventions. Can it be ſuppoſed that Vertue ſhould have ſeen that old bill, and with his inquiſitive and diligent turn, eſpecially about painters, not have enquired

century. Rowley muſt either have poliſhed the language ſo as to have made it adopted, or he would not have been underſtood. The idiom lent to him would have been more unintelligible to his cotemporaries, than the old words ſprinkled on the poems aſcribed to him, are to the preſent generation. Neither can any man of ſenſe believe, that a maſter genius can write with amazing abilities in an age however barbarous, and yet never be heard of till ſome hundreds of years after his death. The more a man ſoars above his cotemporaries, the more he ſtrikes, eſpecially in a rude age. The more an age is poliſhed, the more are men on a par, and the more difficult it is for genius to penetrate. The next are nearer to the firſt, than in thoſe early ages, when authors are rare. Rivals depreciate the former, and their partizans conteſt the merit of their competitors. Homer on one hand, Shakeſpeare and Milton on the other, confirm this hypotheſis. The Grecian's glory has rolled down to Us with unabated luſtre; he did not lie unknown for centuries. Shakeſpeare was during his life obſcured by the mock pretenſions of Ben Johnſon; and Milton's Paradiſe Loſt was ſold for fifteen pounds.

quired whether there was nothing more? Vertue was even a verſifier, as I have many proofs in his MSS. and ſearched much after Chaucer and Lidgate, of whom he engraved portraits----yet all Rowley's remains, it ſeems, were reſerved for Chatterton, who, it cannot be denied, did forge poetry and proſe for others; and who, as indubitably was born a great poet----yet not a line of tolerable poetry in Rowley's own hand can be produced.----Did Chatterton deſtroy the originals to authenticate their exiſtence? He certainly wrote his forgeries on the backs of old parchments, and there is both internal and external evidence againſt the antiquity of the poetry----but I will not take part in that diſpute. Error, like the ſea, is always gaining as much territory in one place as it loſes in another, and it is to little purpoſe to make it change poſſeſſions.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

NUMBER I.

SINCE I wrote the preceding pages, I have been told that a Gentleman at Briſtol is in poſſeſſion of my original letters to Chatterton in my own hand writing. Will he not be ſo candid as to produce them, when I declare he has my full conſent? They will acquit or condemn me better than my aſſeverations or reaſoning. If they are what I have repreſented them on recollection after nine years are paſt, nothing more is neceſſary to my defence. If the matter or ſtyle of them is contemptuous and arrogant, be the ſhame mine; I deſerve it. It is impoſſible for me to recall words written nine years ago, and which, when written, I moſt certainly did not expect would be publicly diſcuſſed; but I have repeated the tranſaction ſo often in that long period of time, and have ſuch perfect remembrance of my own feelings on that occaſion, that I have no fear of my ſentiments being produced.

Another reflection occurs to me, and probably will to my accuſers. I have complained of Chatterton's

terton's unwarrantable letter to me, on my not returning his MSS. Shall I not be told that I probably did not reſtore to him *that* letter? I believe I did not; I believe I preſerved it----but what has become of it in nine years, I cannot ſay. I have loſt, or miſlaid it. If I find it, it ſhall be ſubmitted to every poſſible ſcrutiny of the expert before I produce it as genuine----and though I hope to be believed that ſuch letter I did receive, and did mention to ſeveral perſons * long before I was charged with ill-treatment of Chatterton, I deſire no imputation ſhould lie on his memory, beyond what his character and my unprovoked † aſſertions render probable. I could not feel regret on his redemand of MSS. on which I had ſet no eſteem.

I

* It ſhould be remembered that I gave this account while Chatterton was living, and he could have contradicted it, if falſe; for I gave it to any body that queſtioned me, the moment the MSS. began to be talked of, and I have no doubt but it came to Chatterton's knowledge.

† I certainly had received no provocation from Chatterton but his telling me I ſhould not have dared to retain his MSS. if he had not truſted me with his ſituation. If he gave me *that* provocation, it was true: if he did not, I had no reaſon to invent it.

I might have preſerved copies, both of the poems and of his letters, if I had been willing. No adequate reaſon can be given why I returned all promiſcuouſly, but his inſult and my own indifference. Every part of my narrative is conſiſtent, not only with truth, but with Chatterton's character and the circumſtances of his ſtory. I have not the vanity to think that to palliate my own conduct, I could weave a tale, that I have the boldneſs to ſay will not be found falſe in a ſingle fact. Still leſs ſhould I have let the accuſation gather head, and increaſe to its preſent bulk, had I apprehended any detection. I have neither gone, written, or ſent to Briſtol. I have left Chatterton's fautors in undiſturbpoſſeſſion of all documents. I have not tried to ſuppreſs a ſingle circumſtance. On the contrary, I deſire the Whole of my correſpondence with Chatterton may be aſcertained. I demand the publicity of my letters to him. Let them be either printed, or depoſited where every man may have recourſe to them. Till that is done, and till *they* contradict me, I will truſt to the candour of the public, that I ſhall not ſtand ill in their opinion, for my conduct towards that unhappy youth. If my letters are ſuppreſſed, will it not induce a ſuſpicion that the adherents to the authenticity of

Rowley's

Rowley's poems, in anger to me for having been the firſt to ſtagger belief in their great Diana, have converted my diſtruſt of their originality into pride and inhumanity ?----But I am in no pain. The public have been called in as judges; and not being actuated by the prejudices of thoſe whoſe intereſt it may be to ſupport a fraud, or of thoſe whoſe litterary bigotry has attached them to a legend, will be under no difficulty to pronounce ſentence. Nor is my cauſe ſo neceſſarily connected with Rowley's poems as to ſtand and fall together. If Rowley could riſe from the dead and acknowledge every line aſcribed to him, he could not prove that I uſed Chatterton ill. *I would take the ghoſt's word*; I am ſure it would be in my favour.

Having thus fulfilled what was due to the public and to myſelf, I declare I will never trouble myſelf any farther about Chatterton and his writings; much leſs reply to any anonymous perſons that ſhall chuſe to enter into the controverſy. I do not think myſelf of conſequence enough to take up the time of the public; and I have probably too few years to live, to throw away one of the remaining hours on ſo ſilly a diſpute.

NUMBER

NUMBER II.

HAVING ſaid, p. 11. that Chatterton alternately flattered and ſatirized all ranks and parties, the following liſt of pieces written by him, but never printed, will confirm that aſſertion. I have ſeen thoſe pieces, copies of which are in the hands of a gentleman who favoured me with the liſt.

1. "Kew Gardens." This is a long ſatirical rhapſody of ſome hundred lines, in Churchill's manner, againſt perſons in power, and their friends at Briſtol.

2. "The Flight:" addreſſed to a great man; Ld. B---e. In 40 ſtanzas of 6 lines each. Thus endorſed. "Too long for the Political Regiſter---Curtailed in the digreſſions---Given to Mr. Mortimer."

3. "The Dowager, a Tragedy."---Unfiniſhed---only two ſcenes.

4. "Verſes addreſſed to the Rev. Mr. Catcot, on his book on the Deluge:" ridiculing his ſyſtems and notions.

OTHER PIECES IN MS.

1. "To a great lady." A very ſcandalous addreſs; ſigned Decimus. On the back of this is written, "(Jeremiah Dyſon, Eſq; by the Whiſperer. 10s. 6d. a column."

2. "To C. Jenkinſon, Eſq;" An abuſive letter; ſigned Decimus: (or Probus, as it ſhould ſeem from the indorſement) beginning thus,

"Sir,

As the nation has been long in the dark in conjecturing the miniſterial agent, &c."

3. "To Ld. Mansfield." A very abuſive letter; ſigned Decimus: (or Ænenenius, as it ſhould ſeem from the endorſement) beginning thus,

"My Lord,

"I am not going to accuſe you of puſillanimity, &c."

N. B. In this piece many paragraphs are cancelled

led, with this remark in the margin. "[Profecution will lye upon this]"

4. "An introductory eſſay" to a political paper ſet up by him, called the Moderator, in favour of adminiſtration: thus beginning,

"To enter into a detail of the reaſons which induced me to take up the title of this paper, &c."

5. "To Lord North:" a letter ſigned the Moderator, and dated May 26th. 1770, beginning thus,

"My Lord,

It gives me a painful pleaſure, &c." This is an encomium on adminiſtration for rejecting the lord mayor Beckford's remonſtrance.

6. "A letter to the Lord Mayor Beckford," ſigned Probus; dated May 26, 1770. This is a violent abuſe of government for rejecting the remonſtrance, and begins thus,

"When the endeavours of a ſpirited people to free themſelves from an inſupportable ſlavery." On the back of this eſſay, which is directed to Cary, is this endorſement,

" Accepted by Bingley, ſet for and thrown out of the North-Briton, 21 June, on account of the lord mayor's death.

" Loſt by his death on this eſſay	1	11	6
" Gained in elegies	2	2	0
in eſſays	3	3	0
" Am glad he is dead by	3	13	6

NUMBER III.

AS the warmeſt devotées to Chatterton cannot be more perſuaded than I am of the marvellous vigour of his genius at ſo very premature an age, I ſhall here ſubjoin the principal aeras of his life, which when compared with the powers of his mind, the perfection of his poetry, his knowledge of the world, which, though in ſome reſpects erroneous, ſpoke quick intuition, his humour, his vein of ſatire, and above all the amazing number of books he muſt have looked into, though chained down to a laborious and almoſt inceſſant ſervice, and confined to Briſtol, except at moſt for the laſt five months of his life, the rapidity with which he ſeized all the topics of converſation then in vogue, whether of politics, litterature, or faſhion; and when added to all this maſs of reflection, it is remembered that his youthful paſſions were indulged to exceſs, faith in ſuch a prodigy may well be ſuſpended----and we ſhould look for ſome ſecret agent behind the curtain, if it were not as difficult to believe that any man poſſeſſed of ſuch a vein of genuine poetry would have ſubmitted to lie concealed, while he actuated a puppet; or would have ſtooped to proſtitute his muſe to ſo many unworthy functions. But nothing in Chatterton can be ſeparated from

from Chatterton. His nobleſt flights, his ſweeteſt ſtrains, his groſſeſt ribaldry, and his moſt common-place imitations of the productions of magazines, were all the effervescences of the ſame ungovernable impulſe, which, cameleon like, imbibed the colours of all it looked on. It was Oſſian, or a Saxon monk, or Gray, or Smollet, or Junius---- and if it failed moſt, in what it moſt affected to be, a poet of the fifteenth century, it was becauſe it could not imitate what had not exiſted. I firmly believe that the firſt impreſſion made on ſo warm and fertile an imagination was the ſight of ſome old parchments at Briſtol; that meeting with Oſſian's poems, his ſoul, which was all poetry, felt it was a language in which his invention could expreſs itſelf; and having lighted on the names of Rowley and Canninge, he bent his reſearches towards the authors of their age, and as far as his means could reach, in ſo confined a ſphere, he aſſembled materials enough to deceive thoſe who have all their lives dealt in ſuch uncouth lore, and not in our claſſic authors, nor have perceived that taſte had not developed itſelf in the reign of Edward IV. It is the taſte in Rowley's ſuppoſed poems that will for ever exclude them from belonging to that period. Mr. Tyrrwhit and Mr. Wharton have convicted them of being ſpurious by technical criteri-

ons;

ons; and Rowley I doubt will remain in poſſeſſion of nothing that did not deſerve to be forgotten, even ſhould ſome fragments of old parchments and old verſes be aſcertained antique.

Thomas Chatterton, born 20th. of Nov. 1752

Educated at the bluecoat ſchool at Briſtol, where reading and writing and accompts are only taught.

Put clerk to an attorney, July 1766

Firſt taken notice of for a paper put into Forby's Briſtol Journal, and ſaid to be from an old MS. October 1ſt. 1768

Firſt inſerted a little poem of his own and an extract from an old MS. in the Town and Country Magazine, February 1769

Sent ſpecimens of ſeveral ancient poems to Mr. H. W. Said, there were many more, and offered to tranſcribe the whole, Mar. 1769

He was then aged 16 years and 4 months.

Went to London, April 1770

Died, Auguſt 1770

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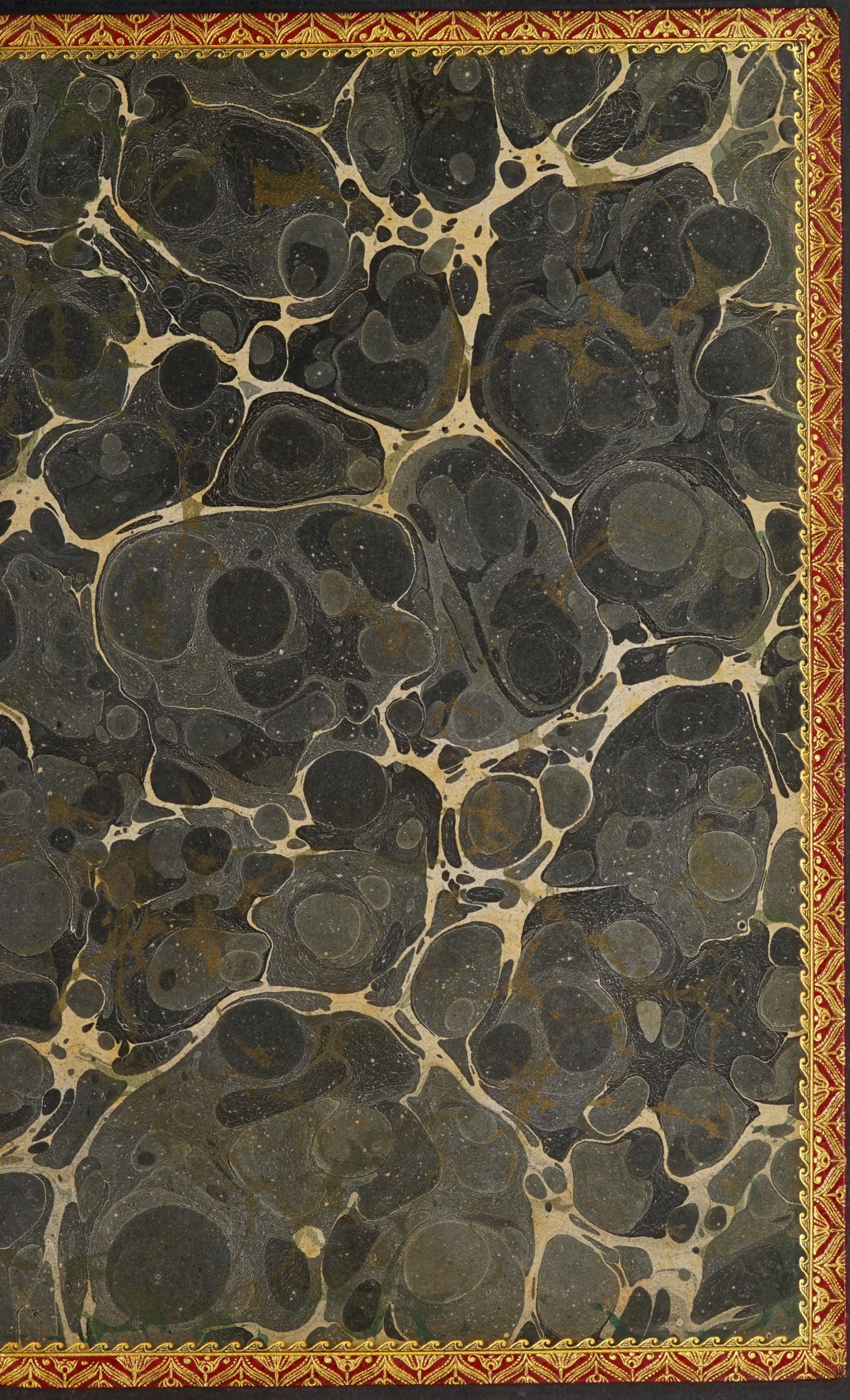
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